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Feb. 22, 2002
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NEWS RELEASE

SPECIAL EFFECTS AND SURPRISES IN STORE FOR UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON PRODUCTION OF 'JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR'

DAYTON, Ohio — In its own right, the Andrew Lloyd Weber and Tim Rice "rock opera" *Jesus Christ Superstar* is a great piece of theater, said director Linda Dunlevy. But technical special effects and a few surprises will make the University of Dayton production, which Dunlevy has dubbed the "Christian version," even more entertaining, she said.

"Even if you've seen the show five or six times, you haven't seen it quite like this."

Performances will be at 8 p.m. March 8 and 9 and March 14-16, and at 7 p.m. March 10 in the Kennedy Union Boll Theatre. Tickets are \$8 general admission, and can be purchased at the UD box office by calling (937) 229-2545.

Hailed as a ground-breaking musical when it debuted on Broadway in 1971, *Jesus Christ Superstar* follows Christ in his last seven mortal days, dramatizing his entry into Jerusalem, the unrest caused by his preaching and popularity, his betrayal at the hands of Judas, his trial before Pontius Pilate and, ultimately, his crucifixion.

Dunlevy can't reveal why she's calling her production the "Christian version" without giving away the ending, which is one of the surprises, she said. She will say other surprises include some technological special effects, including pre-shot and live video during each performance, as well as portrayals of Judas Iscariot and some of the apostles by women.

"It's important to note that I'm not making any feminist statements or statements on gender politics, although I'm not opposed to them," she said. "In this case, I felt it was important to ignore gender and just cast the best people for the roles. Some of those roles are very vocally challenging, particularly that of Judas (played by Sarah Lamb), and we believed that forcing a young male voice into that kind of countertenor range could actually be harmful."

Other leads in the approximately 50-member cast include John Surso as Jesus Christ, Erin Killeen as Mary Magdelene, David Karol as Pilate and Michael Wadham as Herod.

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"We have a great cast, they're really energetic," she said, also crediting faculty assistants Lee Hoffman, vocal director; Jim Latten, orchestra conductor; Mark Cummings, choreography; Darrell Anderson, effects; and Teresa Coldwell, costumes; for their roles in making the UD production "visually and musically exciting."

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For media interviews, call **Linda Dunlevy** at (937) 229-4119.